

WHAT'S NEW: DREAM

May 2014

While the vast majority of funding for the Division of Juvenile Justice Services (JJS) comes in the form of general fund revenues appropriated by the Utah State Legislature (93%), JJS also has the ability to pursue grants to pilot new programs and services in order to assess their effectiveness before rolling out on a broader scale. For example, JJS currently has a federal JABG grant to pilot an in-home community Observation & Assessment (O&A) program. O&A's have traditionally been a 45-day residential program that provides comprehensive evaluation, treatment planning, and recommendations to the Juvenile Court. If this pilot is effective, it will reduce the number of youth placed out-of-home, reduce pre-service wait times in detention, and improve the quality of O&A assessment the youth receive as it will occur in the youth's "natural" environment. If the pilot proves to be successful, the model may be rolled out to other areas of the state.

JJS recently applied for a new federal grant. Utah's application is called the "JJS Digital Readiness & Employment Acquisition Matrix" or "DREAM" for short. If JJS' application is selected, 100 moderate and high risk youth in long-term secure care will be given the opportunity to prepare for employment opportunities in Utah's technology sector. The youth will receive technology based coursework in their school curriculum such as Microsoft Word and IC3 as well as receiving soft skills and executive function training to enhance job readiness. They will also have individualized reentry plans that give emphasis to employment.

Thirty-two of the youth will be selected to receive 78 hours of additional programming: certification training in Microsoft Excel and Adobe InDesign; a rich media arts workshop; and "Why Try, an evidence-based soft job skills curriculum. Partners will include not only JJS staff, but also partnering companies (AtTask and CorEMR), Vocational Rehabilitation Services, Utah Department of Workforce Services/WIA, and technical college advisors. Success of the program will be measured by collecting data outcomes for youth on technology education and employment attainment as well as reduction in recidivism. If proven to be effective, JJS would then pursue other funding opportunities to continue the program.

While the results of the DREAM grant application will not be known for several months, the prospect brings a great deal of excitement to JJS as we continually look for ways to improve our work with the youth we serve in meeting our mission goals of Community Protection, Accountability, and Competency Development.